

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony in Support of HB 5370 and HB 5369
To the Program Review and Investigations Committee
Submitted by: Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director
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To Co-Chairs Kissel and Mushinsky, Senator Fonfara, Representative Carpino and Members of the Committee, please accept this testimony submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) in support of **HB 5370 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning the Performance of Connecticut's State Parks**, and **HB 5369, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning Certain Fiscal and Resource-Related Matters Pertaining to State Parks**.

CLCC works with land trusts (now numbering over 137), other conservation and advocacy organizations, government entities and landowners to increase the pace, quality, scale and permanency of land conservation in Connecticut while assuring the perpetual, high quality stewardship of conserved lands in the state. Consistent with this mission, working to ensure that our state conservation lands, including state parks (Parks), receive adequate support for stewardship and management is an annual policy priority for CLCC.

Of further note is that CLCC is fortunate to operate under the fiscal sponsorship of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) and shares a common interest with CFPA in its mission to protect our public lands. We therefore associate our testimony with the additional comments and technical summaries provided by CFPA's Executive Director Eric Hammerling.

HB 5370, in particular Section 3, and **HB 5369** provide for the potential of critically needed revenue streams for Parks, which should be used to supplement, not replace the budget allotment that Parks presently receive. Re-investing revenue derived from Parks, back into the Park system is one that makes good fiscal sense.

Study after study provide mounting evidence that outdoor recreation and natural resources conservation have measurable economic impacts – and are an investment worth protecting. For Connecticut-specific metrics, please see, for example, Gunther, Peter, and et. al., Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis, University of Connecticut, *The Economic Impact of State Parks, Forests and Natural Resources under the Management of the Department of Environmental Protection*, June 15, 2011.

The revenue generating mechanisms provided by **HB 5370** and **HB 5369** will help to protect the millions in public and private investments that have already been made in acquiring and managing the lands that comprise our Park system -- lands that protect our air and water, provide for critical habitat, generate revenue through business and tourism, and provide the public with an opportunity to recreate and enjoy the landscapes that make Connecticut so special.

We are greatly appreciative of the Committee's leadership in addressing the critically important needs of our Park system through these bills and thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments.

